

# МУЗЫКА В ЗЕРКАЛЕ ФИЛОСОФИИ MUSIC IN THE MIRROR OF PHILOSOPHY



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**G. RYBINTSEVA**

*S. Rachmaninov Rostov State Conservatory*

## **BAROQUE AND CLASSICISM: NATURE AND HISTORY**

In the book “The Decline of the West” Oswald Spengler named two ways of exploring the world by man: these are Nature and History. Nature is the image of the world in a state of static, whereas History presents the world as a process of continuous coming into being. Two main European styles – baroque and classicism – can be used as an artistic confirmation of Spengler’s thesis.

Methods for the development of musical material characteristic of baroque music excluded the possibility of transforming the original thematism which led to the “natural” statics of the images of Baroque music. In architecture, fine arts, in the literature of the Baroque style one can see a tendency to recreate the diversity of nature, where a human is a part of natural phenomena. For the above mentioned purposes the music used nature sound imitation techniques and word-painting; a new musical language has appeared which made it

possible to embody the natural manifestations of a person: his affects, emotions and feelings.

The art of Classicism, on the contrary, tends to convey the dynamics of History. In the music of Classicism this purpose is facilitated by the methods of intensive figurative and intonation development, as well as the genre nature of thematism, which makes it possible to reproduce the emotional atmosphere of a particular period of history. The forms of art that are static in their nature embody the theme of History due to the appeal to the traditions of Antiquity. The architectural structures of Classicism resemble the monuments of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome; masters of fine art and authors of dramatic works give preference to subjects and images of Ancient history and mythology.

*Keywords:* nature, history, art, art style, Baroque, Classicism.

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**Г. В. РЫБИНЦЕВА**

*Ростовская государственная консерватория им. С. В. Рахманинова*

## **БАРОККО И КЛАССИЦИЗМ: ПРИРОДА И ИСТОРИЯ**

В книге «Закат Европы» О. Шпенглер назвал два способа освоения мира человеком: Природа и История. Природа есть образ мира в состоянии статики, История же представляет мир как процесс непрерывного развития. Художественным подтверждением тезиса О. Шпенглера могут служить два больших новоевропейских стиля – барокко и классицизм.

Характерные для барочной музыки приемы развития материала исключали возможность преобразования исходного тематизма, что обусловило «природную» статику образов музыкального барокко. В архитектуре, изобразительном искусстве, литературе данного стиля усматривается тенденция к воссозданию многообразия природы, в том числе человека как од-

ного из ее явлений. В соответствующих целях в музыке использовались приемы звукоизобразительности и звукоподражания; сложился новый музыкальный язык, позволивший воплощать природные проявления человека – его аффекты, эмоции, чувства.

Искусство классицизма, наоборот, тяготеет к передаче динамики Истории. Музыка классицизма в этом способствуют приемы интенсивного образно-интонационного развития, а также жанровый характер тематизма, который дает возможность воспроизводить эмоциональ-

ную атмосферу конкретного периода истории. Статичные по своей природе виды искусства воплощают тему Истории благодаря обращению к традициям античной древности. Архитектурные сооружения классицизма напоминают памятники Древней Греции и Древнего Рима; мастера изобразительного искусства и авторы драматических произведений отдают предпочтение сюжетам и образам античной истории и мифологии.

*Ключевые слова:* природа, история, искусство, художественный стиль, барокко, классицизм.

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Despite its rather considerable age the musical art of Baroque and Classicism retains its wide popularity and remains a popular object for national and international researches who aim to identify the most significant features of the above mentioned styles (see [1; 2; 3; 4]). At the same time, the question of the existence of common grounds that ensure the stylistic unity of various types of art, as a rule, remains outside the scope of attention of researches. The discovery of such grounds can be facilitated by the statements of O. Spengler presented in his well-known bestseller "The Decline of the West".

This work contains the thesis about the existence of two ways of exploring the world by man. "Nature and history are two diametrically opposite ways of modeling the picture of the world. Reality becomes nature if the whole process of becoming is considered from the point of view of what has become; it is history if what has become is subordinating to what is becoming", – the author wrote [5, p. 158]. This means that Nature is the world that retains its qualitative definiteness; whereas History is the image of the world undergoing continuous progressive development. From the standpoint of this assertion it seems appropriate to consider two art styles of a New Europe – Baroque and Classicism.

The baroque style was formed at the origins of the Modern Period during the period of a radical change in cognitive priorities. The key person that marked the beginning of the era was Francis Bacon who called for a comprehensive study of nature in order to use the knowledge gained in the interests of mankind. Bacon's appeal marked the beginning

of a steady increase in interest in the study of the material world, in the intensive development of natural sciences which focused on discovering the laws of nature. "If for a man of the Middle Ages the goal of cognition was reduced to obeying God's will in the best way, then the goal of cognition of a modern man was to subordinate nature to his will", as R. Tarnas writes in this regard [6, p. 244]. It is well known that natural phenomena exist in the conditions of an annual cycle, that is, a time-cycle which assumes an endless alternation of four seasons and excludes progressive development. A similar understanding of the passage of time is demonstrated by the art of the Baroque style the images of which are often in a state of continuous movement, but at the same time do not undergo qualitative changes and retain their self-identity. This is a movement without progress, movement-shift which fully corresponds to the mechanistic picture of the world that has become established in the public consciousness.

The most illustrative in this regard are the methods of working with musical material prevailing in the Baroque music, the basis of which was ostinato and variant repetition. Various kinds of imitations, as well as vertical- and horizontal-shifting counterpoint, recreate the sound image of rotation which corresponds to the natural concept of time-circulation. As a result, over the entire length of rather voluminous musical compositions the principal musical themes do not undergo significant changes, retaining their qualitative definiteness. The absence of intensive intonation development and figurative transformations indicates that the theme

of Nature as understood by O. Spengler dominates in the music of the Baroque style.

However, the commitment of Baroque music to the theme of Nature can be found not only at the level of the prevailing techniques of musical development. In the baroque style the desire to recreate nature in all its manifestations is quite clearly felt, that is, all the diversity of the inorganic and organic world, as well as a human who is presented here, first of all, as a natural being, whose nature is revealed through affective reactions, emotions and feelings. The presence of a stable tendency to create images of nature confirms, in particular, the widespread use of nature sound imitation techniques and word-painting to recreate the murmur of water, thunderclaps and birdsong. Suffice it to recall "The Four Seasons" by Antonio Vivaldi, as well as the still popular works of French harpsichordists ("The Cuckoo", "The Hen", "The recall of the Birds", "The Butterflies", "The Little Windmills", etc.). An equally significant means of emphasizing the natural essence of a human was the recreation of the ultimate diversity of his natural emotional and affective manifestations. Through the appeal to human emotions and passions a new dimension is emerging in music. Affect is a universal category, a piece of music is directly related to it, some composers call their compositions 'Musical Affects', as M. Lobanova writes [7, p. 155]. This can explain the extraordinary popularity of the Baroque opera which most fully and truthfully embodied information of this kind. In the conditions of the Baroque theater the musical language of the modern European art was formed, due to the variety of speech intonations and various affective manifestations of a person: "The influence of musical drama was so great that by the beginning of the 18th century its expressive techniques began to play the role of typical features of the musical language of modernity as a whole," as V. Konen emphasized [8, p. 71].

Emotionally expressive intonations, the most popular among which were *lamento* ones, as well as diverse musical and rhetorical figures, made it possible to achieve the sound embodiment of a variety of emotional = natural manifestations of a person. In the Western Baroque, with its interest in the agitated sphere of emotions, a new theme, extremely characteristic of culture, arose: sorrowful suffering in anticipation of death-retribution for a sin. It was reflected in the genre of the *lamento* aria, extremely expressive in the sound means, and that has retained their relevance to that day" [9, p. 108].

Representatives of various types of the Baroque art showed a tendency towards "natural" interpretation of images and subjects. Thus, the Baroque architectural structures are characterized

by the predominance of natural curvature and natural imperfection of proportions. Their rich décor clearly demonstrates the diversity of the inorganic, vegetable, animal world, real-life beings, as well as mythological ones and creatures generated by the master's fantasy (see: buildings of the Dresden Zwinger, architect M. Pöppelmann; Sanssouci Palace in Potsdam, architect G. von Knobelsdorf). One of these creatures is a man who, in the baroque style, is represented both in his anthropomorphic appearance and symbolically, namely, in the form of columns which have symbolized man since Antiquity. It is symptomatic that such (anthropomorphic and symbolic) images in this case perform mainly a decorative function, organically integrating into the overall composition of the baroque décor. Consequently, the image of a human is not dominant here; this is one of the natural phenomena among others.

In the visual arts of the Baroque, images of Nature find the most diverse embodiment. In this regard, one should recall the most indicative baroque genre that is still life which recreates the image of nature in its utmost diversity, whether it is the world of objects, flora or fauna. Landscapes and hunting scenes which conveyed vivid human emotions, expression and drama to the phenomena of nature were no less in demand. As for the images of the person himself, widely represented in the genres of portrait and historical painting, here his bodily, physiological, that is, his natural component is invariably emphasized. Baroque masters with extraordinary truthfulness recreate the deathly body pallor of the crucified Christ, the velvety skin of the aristocrats portrayed, the hypertrophied physicality of mythological creatures (in the works by P. Rubens, J. Jordaens, A. van Dyck).

As for the younger contemporary of Baroque, that is, Classicism, here the theme of History can be considered as the dominant one. The rise of Classicism coincides in time with the revival of interest in social and political problems and, accordingly, in social history. If for many centuries the attention of mankind was focused on the history of the Sacred, then in the period under review the task of studying and explaining social history is brought to the forefront, the subject of which is a person – a commander, a monarch, a hero – people expressing the interests of a certain social stratum or society as a whole. The reason for this is the cardinal changes in the structure of society and the state as a result of European social revolutions which proved the possibility of a qualitative transformation of society, as well as the active participation of a person in the historical process. The culmination of these efforts was a new type of thinking that is now characterized by the term historicism. Its founder,

G. Hegel, was the first to present the history of the universe as a natural, purposeful process, the necessary component of which is the history of mankind.

At the same time, it was the music that turned out to be most accordant with the character of the new world outlook. Music exists in time, and therefore is similar to history; unlike other types of art, it has the ability, even in the most generalized form, to convey the dynamics of the historical process. It is no coincidence that G. Hegel's worldview explaining the reasons, method and direction of historical development with the help of the laws of dialectics, is often compared with the creative achievement of L. van Beethoven: "Hegel in the field of philosophy and Beethoven in music were the greatest dialecticians who had no equal in the previous history of culture", as A. Klimovitsky and V. Selivanov wrote [10, p. 144].

This analogy seems to be quite justified, since the basis of the structure of the sonata allegro which dominates in the music of classicism was formed by the basic principles of dialectics. Among them there are the law of unity and struggle of opposites which presupposes the unity-contradiction of the main and secondary parts; the law of transformation of quantity into quality, the adherence to which is ensured by motivational development: and, finally, the law of the negation of the negation which determines the correlation of exposition and reprise. The reliance on these dialectical principles provided the sonata form with the opportunity to recreate the dynamics of any process, including the historical one, and it was most clearly demonstrated by L. van Beethoven in his symphonic works.

Moreover, in the conditions of Classicism, the status of the most important characteristic of the musical image acquires the genre definiteness of thematism – a phenomenon that in the modern musicology has received the name of "generalization through a genre". The use of the characteristic features of everyday or folk-everyday genres allowed non-program instrumental music to designate the historical period of the "action" of the hero of a musical composition, as well as to distinguish his social status. As M. Lobanova notes, "genre clutches, transformations, transitions and modulations become like <...> the inclusion in the literary text of various utterances representing this or that tradition, and, consequently, certain layers of historical memory" [11, p. 179]. The most indicative in this sense is the presence of the minuet genre in most symphonic works by representatives of Viennese classicism. Its presence indicates that the hero of musical Classicism is a person belonging to the highest social strata of European society in the 18th – early 19th centuries.

The genre basis of musical thematism allowed the masters of Classicism to display real historical events in a generalized form. Thus, the presence in Beethoven's musical language of the rhythms and intonations of marches, songs, dances of revolutionary Paris is rightly regarded as an echo of the heroic and dramatic atmosphere of his time. "The Parisian song and song-dance of the era of the revolution, spreading widely, turned to be that historical wedge that split musical development into music before Beethoven and the following one, after him, the music of the 19th century", as B. Asafiev wrote [12, p. 261].

In the context of the presented reflections, a reasonable question may arise. How was the theme of History displayed in such static forms as architecture and fine arts? When answering those questions it is worth recalling the increased attention of the masters of Classicism to the traditions of Antiquity, that is, the ancient civilization and, therefore, to history itself. The structures of Classicism often have specific prototypes in the artistic heritage of ancient Greece or Ancient Rome. These are triumphal arches, imperial columns, palaces and churches that have the appearance of the ancient temples. At the same time, the colonnade motif that was borrowed from the ancient architects has a fundamental – constructive, as well as significant ideological meaning under the conditions of the new style. The column in this case is no longer an element of décor, but a support that ensures the integrity of the structure; it is the supporting structure on which the floor rests. And since the column is a symbolic image of a man, the slender colonnades of Classicism can be interpreted as the image of an ideal society, which the thinkers of the Enlightenment dreamed of. Such a society consists of rigidly unified elements; they are no longer reflective individuals, but reasonable citizens who observe the laws common to everybody and are aware of their high responsibility to their society and the State.

The historical theme also reigns supreme in the in the field of fine arts. It is no coincidence that the genre of historical painting which requires an appeal to the ancient subjects or to the images of the Sacred History has become the most preferable for Classicism. At the same time the choice of historical plots was due to the presence of civic themes designed to emphasize the superiority of common interests over individual emotions and feelings. The genre of ceremonial portrait also had similar attitudes which accentuated the social or professional status of the person being portrayed, that is, his place in the society and, therefore, in the social history. If the portraits of the Baroque masters aimed at capturing the features of a person's appearance depicting him as realistic as possible, one might say



“vividly”, then the ceremonial portrait necessarily includes an abundance of details such as attributes, symbols, allegories that allow us to visually represent the social function that the protagonist of the painting performs in the historical context of the specific social structure. Thus, the appeal to the ancient traditions allowed the masters of architecture and fine arts of Classicism to adequately recreate the image of the history of mankind.

All of the above allows us to consider the thesis of O. Spengler about two ways of man’s exploring the world to be fair in relation to the first All-European artistic styles of Modern period. By means of various types of art, the monuments of Baroque and Classicism captured the images of Nature existing in the conditions of time-circulation, and those of History as a purposeful progressive process, offering their versatile interpretation.

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**Galina V. Rybintseva**

Ph. D. (Philosophy), Associate Professor, Vice-rector for Academic Affairs,  
Head of the Department of Social and Humanitarian Disciplines  
S. Rachmaninov Rostov State Conservatory  
Russia, 344002, Rostov-on-Don  
*gvrib@mail.ru*  
ORCID: 0000-0002-5289-4654

**Рыбинцева Галина Валериановна**

кандидат философских наук, доцент,  
проректор по учебной работе,  
заведующая кафедрой социально-гуманитарных дисциплин  
Ростовская государственная консерватория им. С. В. Рахманинова  
Россия, 344002, Ростов-на-Дону  
*gvrib@mail.ru*  
ORCID: 0000-0002-5289-4654

