PIANO ENSEMBLES FOR CHILDREN FOR DEVELOPING PERFORMING SKILLS AND CREATIVE THINKING (ON THE EXAMPLE OF MUSIC BY ST. PETERSBURG COMPOSERS)

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Abstract

The article discusses the theoretical and psychological problems of Ensemble Performance in the context of the "dialogue". Piano ensemble works by St. Petersburg composers are in the light of the stylistic and compositional innovations of the XX century. The program music as a factor in the expansion of figurative sphere in child psychology, the formation of the performing skills through making music together: the flexibility of intonation, a variety of nuances with the wide use of timbral possibilities of piano ensemble, samples of tone and atonal music. The article presents the ensemble pieces for children composers by Belov, A.Smelkov, S.Banevich.

Key words: *ensemble, performance, dialogue, composers, stylistic, innovations, intonation, child, psychology, creative, thinking*

The piano ensemble as a phenomenon of musical culture is one of the most important events of the golden age of the European chamber and instrumental music of the past centuries. From the moment of birth (XVIII century), the cooperative piano performance has created the image of "*dialogue*" when this union arose, above all, the joy of communication between two passionate music art people, not necessarily professionals, but it was always the confidential *conversation* at the same instrument. That is why the genre of piano ensemble became very quickly the most popular and universal of all chamber instrumental genres in Europe. Over the years of its development the piano ensemble has developed in composing and performing creativity and theoretical understanding. One of the musical-theoretical problems, arising in this area, is considering a piano duet in the context of "dialogic interaction". In this article we will touch upon the subject. We will consider the piano duet as a multi-level dialogue with its own internal form of communication, including the co-creation of the author, performers and the audience. It is a complex communicative process. Creativity is always creation, and interpretation is re-creation. In this sense the artistic communication is also re-creation, therefore, the interpretation becomes its integral part. Interpretation is also the comprehension of the author's concept and the composer's idea of the image origin. Communication in music is often dialogical and of game nature. It is the music of piano ensembles where one can clearly watch the interaction of the game logic and the dialogic nature of artistic communication. The piano ensemble can be regarded as a dialogue, as a specific level of the communicative process. At the same time this raises the artistic layering of the dialogue, "many-dimensional" communicative space. Many pages of piano ensembles are the proof of it. Moreover, it can be mentioned that the duet is not always the same as some one's opinion, but sometimes the contrast or the similarity-contrast, in which the competitive game nature of the artistic communication, implemented as a piano duet creativity, is of great importance. The correlation of your desires with the desires of other people is a fundamental principle of the dialogue and communication as an aspect of communication involving mutual activity of the subjects, the attitude towards "the Other" as an equal subject with his / her freedom, sovereignty, their own system of values. The need for "the Other", the cognition of "the Other" and the ability for communication is a fundamental property of human existence, in which, according to the famous Russian scientist Mikhail Bakhtin (2000, p. 294), he reveals "both for others and for himself". The duet is the first and basic type of the musical ensemble. It is known that the original pieces for two performers who are instrumentalists, were called "dialogue". The duet overcomes the individual limitations. Using figurative words of Vyacheslav Medushevsky (1993, p. 59), the well-known Russian scientist and researcher of ways to express the spiritual life of man in music, one can say that in the duet there is a "masterly logic of the subtlest dialogical relations of liberated individualistic subjectivity and the

origin of supra-individual, calling for restraint ". It is important to note that between partners in the duet two vectors of communication can be traced back, within which the complex system of auditory and visual contacts is built up. The duet performance allows not only to "hear the invisible", but also to see it. However, in the external manifestations of the dialogue as the direct interaction of its participants, the main thing is the internal paradigm: the music should sound "inside the mind", according to the famous composer Valentin Silvestrov. The duet communication supposes so-called "empathic listening", a special form of feedback in the communication process, which is aimed at achieving mutual understanding and supporting. "Plunging" into your own consciousness by listening, into the consciousness of the composer and the partner in the duet, gains strength, leading to better implementation of the ideas inherent in the masterpiece, to the disclosure of the author's concept and musical images. "The proximity of the neighbour" in the ensemble music-making creates the unique "interpenetrativeness" which generates the special integrity – the essence of the ensemble art. Mentioning "dialogism" of the piano duet not only in the performer's interpretation, one can hold attention on the "dialogism" of the music text for the piano ensemble. First of all, the text exposes the author's concept, the meaning of "the dialogue", which becomes the main compositional principle for the ensemble creativity.

The term "intercomprehension" for the piano ensemble is full of deep philosophical and psychological sense. In the philosophical works by Henri Bergson, E. Husserl, W. Dilthey one can find reasoning about the intentionality of consciousness, intersubjectivity of perception and co-perception, "in-perception" (plunging deep into the image or the other person's consciousness). The duet work fully implements the principle "to be a means to exist for the other person, and through him – for himself" (Bakhtin 2000). In musicology this problem has been well developed. So Vyacheslav Medushevsky defined the psychological ability for removing the opposition between "I" and "not I", etc., as "identification". Explaining these provisions as follows, Medushevsky writes: "This ability is opposite to the sharp separation of the subject from the object, necessary for the sensible scientific approach; but it is the ability for perceiving the world is both a means of analysis – dissection, and of synthesis – junction of heterogeneous elements. The essence of the dialogue is the internal interaction, intersection, correlation". In practice, turning to the inner world based on musicians' overall ability for "mental" sound viewing ("internal hearing"), is manifested in the phenomenon of "inner conductor", necessary for the duet creativity. There is a kind of "call-over" of internal dialogues. Moreover, the composer's personality, as well as the performer's and the listener's ones, can be regarded as "the space for the dialogue of cultures". The ensemble music-making gives the opportunity for performers to critically reflect on their own "borders" and on his / her position, his / her "horizon of questioning" that also leads to " the movement" of understanding and comprehension of the "I", to increasing the communicative possibilities of the duet creativity. In the duet it is not corrected by the conductor or the group, but by each partner independently. Getting accustomed to hearing themselves in relation to the other person, and to hearing the other person in relation to themselves, performers learn to objectively evaluate their playing by ear. Compared to the solo performance, the "control by ear" is more difficult in the ensemble because it is necessary not only "to hear" in time, but also to anticipate, "to have a presentiment", to catch the partner's "secret impulses". This kind of "advance reflection" in the duet influences largely on the artistic level of communication. This principle is also determined by the nature of the psychological interaction, by the partners' communication, which is typical of the very nature of the ensemble music-making. It is impossible not to mention one more musical and psychological aspect of "dialogism" of the piano ensemble: it develops "the performer's good ear for music". It is "the performer's good ear for music that allows the musician to perceive the sounding music as the distinct speech, and any change of expressive means – rhythmic shift, modulation, this or that bend of the melodic line, condensing or spacing the structure is to be understood as an event of significance. Then any piece of music carries out the certain clearly audible content, and intoning becomes natural. The famous Russian pianist Elena Sorokina's words are close to this interpretation, "You need for learning to listen to the partner, to reply, to make way for him, to step aside in time" (Sorokina 1988). Psychologists call this important feature in the ensemble performance – the ability for making way for the musical partner – "the exchange of functions": the ability for naturally and freely building "stage setting" in musical actions, to hear passages alternating each other, the chordal

texture, etc. Thus, it can be stated that functional “dialogism”, typical of the piano ensemble music and performance, affects complex psychological mechanisms that are unique to this type of music. “Switching on” of these mechanisms is a long process that requires the teacher‘s rapt attention close attention since the very beginning of the study.

In modern Russian music pedagogics for children works for the piano ensemble have a special place. They are included in the curricula of music schools since the beginner’s period of the study. Piano ensembles of the various degree of difficulty became a sort of "laboratory" for St. Petersburg composers of the late XXth century, in which new trends of the musical language has been developed. In the XXth century the sound picture of the world changed. New sound realities objectively and subjectively affect the composer’s work. The musical language has become infinitely complicated. The composer’s creative image and his technical equipment have changed too. This, in turn, has predetermined the modernization of main formative elements of musical language: themes, harmony, melody, rhythm, texture, creating new compositional methods of the composition technique. The evolution of the musical language in the XXth century gave the impulse to the emergence of diverse and original works in the genre of the piano ensemble. St. Petersburg authors’ works have the sharpness and the expression of ideas, bright non-musical associations; the modus of the concerto format focused in improving the duet score, in transforming the composer’s language, in the refusal from stereotypical distribution of Primo’s and Secondo’s roles. Works for children by St. Petersburg composers can be regarded as a special phenomenon. These pieces have become an integral part of the repertoire of children’s music schools not only in Petersburg but also in many cities and towns of Russia. We would like to consider in detail some works for the piano duet by St. Petersburg composers. Let us have a look at the ensemble works by Gennady Belov (b. 1939). He is the honored worker of arts of Russia, Professor of N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov St. Petersburg State Conservatory, postgraduate student of Dmitri Shostakovich, a successor of Shostakovich’s school among St. Petersburg composers. Gennady Belov is a multiple winner of International Competition for Composers “Piano Duo Composition Competition” held in Japan (PDCC). Suite “Pearls of the Islands of Japan” was created in 1989, took the first place at this competition. The Suite consists of six pieces. All the pieces are based, according to the author, on the Japanese folklore and its pastiche. Original, figurative pieces introduce us the culture of the East. The composer took the Japanese epos as the basis. The timbre search of the piano duet sounding are various and interesting. This reflects the composer’s hallmark – the timbre personification of different characters of the cycle. Piece “Urashima and the magic turtle” is poetic and mysterious. Its content is classical: in the Japanese folklore there is a fictional character whose name is Urashima Taro, the hero of the legend about a young fisherman who saved a turtle. The turtle turned out to be a beautiful daughter of the Sea Emperor, and her name was Otohime. She invited Taro in the underwater palace. Soon Urashima asked permission to come back ashore. Otohime gave Urashima a small box and told him not to open it. When he came to his village, he could not find at home his family, and he realized that it'd been 300 years. Struck by grief, he opened the box the princess had given him, and the cloud of white smoke bursts forth out of the box. The fisherman suddenly got old and died. The author’s attention is focused on the dramatic composition. This piano duet is interesting for its combination of constructive organization of the musical material and, simultaneously, the diversity of topics that describe “the characters” and the surrounding world of Nature: “the breath and the rolling of waves”, Urashima’s unpretentious song, the redoubtable turtle. Decomposed chords imitate the sound of waves, create a beautiful harmonic colors. A very different image appears in the play “Folk festival”. This is a frolicsome musical picture, in the piano interpretation of which the borrowed folk motif is ingeniously interwoven. Its initial tone is reminiscent of “golden course” of a French horn. Piece “Pretty Gambi” is composed in the tradition of the French harpsichord players: its texture is transparent and graceful. The refined grace of a Japanese girl is depicted by exquisite means: the oriental piano theme is likened to a stringed musical instrument played by plucking – the Japanese lute “koto”, which sounding is reminiscent of the harp. The piece “Jolly ball” is interesting for its spectacular glissandos, turning from one party to another: these “duets of glissandos” are interrupted by clusters; the four-handed score is balanced, both parts are equal in the aspect of technical difficulties. In the landscape picture “Song about the Moon”, like three phases of the night, are focused three states: normal Moon, merry Moon, and sad Moon.

According to the author's intention, there is a simple three-part form of the play. It is well-known that the most recherché lines of the Japanese poetry are related to the image of the Moon that hides the secret and the power, the beauty and the magic. As in Kagawa Kageki's poetic lines: *It seems to me / I am alone in the whole world / admiring the Moon / But who is he that will neglect this marvelous radiance for no reason?/.* Piece "Golden day" completes the cycle. Here the composer cites Japanese folk song "Doves, doves", which is very famous in Japan. The composer creates the image of a carefree man who is walking along streets of the Japanese capital and whistling his favorite tune. Composer Belov said about this piece, "People noticed that only very angry, callous, insincere people, hypocrites don't sing at all. It is often singing that reveals the human soul, the person's moral ideals and the concept of beauty. Vocal intonations are valuable for this" (From *Gennady Belov's interview* given by the composer to the author of this article in 2013).

Composer **Alexander Smelkov** (b. 1950) is well-known representative of St. Petersburg school of composition, member of the Composers Union. His musical creativity is multifaceted, covering all main music genres: 8 operas, a ballet, symphonic works, instrumental concerts, vocal-symphonic works. A vivid page in Aleksandar Smelkov's works are piano compositions for children. "*The album for children and youth. 12 pieces for piano in 4 hands*" (2005) is Alexander Smelkov's new collection, enriching the ensemble literature not only for students of music schools, but also for music-lovers. This collection brings together pieces of various degrees of difficulty. The first pieces are designed for beginners: for example, "The March", "Elegy", "The Waltz" – for the 1st and 2nd year students of music schools. "The funny song and the sad song" can be played by children at the age of five or six. This album by Alexander Smelkov is concluded with "Rondo Brilliant" and "Allegro marcato". These are spectacular concert pieces, requiring the performers' musical techniques, fine sense of rhythm and artistic temperament. In these ensembles senior school students can play, and the careful ensemble work falls on their teacher's shoulders. This music attracts students, and they are happy to get involved in the duet, study "to breathe" together, to emotionally feel the music. It is not accidental that Alexander Smelkov's music immediately finds a response among young listeners. His work is strongly connected with traditions of Russian and world classics, the music is beautiful and melodic.

Sergei Banevich's works (b. 1941) are closely linked with the musical culture of St. Petersburg. He is the honored worker of arts of Russia, holder of the Order of Friendship of Peoples, the laureate of the prize of St. Petersburg Government. Sergey Banevich is a recognized master of children's music: operas ("Kai and Gerda's story", "The Town in the Snuffbox", "Ferdinand the Magnificent", etc.), musicals ("Tom Sawyer's adventures", "The Magic Swan Geese", etc.) operettas ("Treasure Island", "The Drummer's Fate", etc.), film music, piano works. Banevich's works invariably attract the audience and evoke its warm and grateful response. Many of them firmly entrenched in the theatre, concert and pedagogical repertoire, and became an integral part of children's musical education and musical culture of St. Petersburg. The composer understands very well the child's naive and simultaneously serious spiritual world, his direct perception of the world. With a gift of transformation, Sergei Banevich paves the way to the child's soul by his music, filled with magical sounds and images. The distinctive feature of Sergei Banevich's music for children are well recognized figurative images: already in the title of the plays there are a wide range of fabulous and other images available to children's consciousness, the images that develop children's imagination and emotional sphere.

In the composer's work there are great piano cycles of compositions for children. For example, "Pushkin's Fairy Tales", "Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales", "The little Mermaid", "St. Petersburg Pages". Each of these cycles contains a specific theme, inherent in the title of the collection, which in turn is divided into several piano miniatures. Despite the fact that the pieces in each of the cycles share the same name, there is a possibility of playing each of the pieces separately. Every miniature has its own program name. Their inner artistic purpose is not so much the implementation of the plot as the reproduction of elusive moods, characters and related images. The pieces can be compared with the "Album for the Young" by Schumann, "The Children's Album" by Tchaikovsky or "Spillikins" by S.M. Maykapar. Assisting to develop children's musical thinking, the composer Sergei Banevich introduces his own music and universal ideals to the children through

musical images. Sergei Banevich's piano cycles designed for children who study at the primary and secondary levels of music schools. The task set by the composer is not only to develop the technical skills of performing. Playing these pieces, the child learns to understand the essence of a musical image. In the cycle of pieces "*Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales*" there are 14 piano miniatures, each of which has its own name. The most important feature of the cycle that makes it acceptable and understandable for children, is a subtle connection between the development of the image and the melodic language that are evident in each piece. The composer skillfully created vivid musical pictures, with the theatricality of thinking, typical for him. It manifests itself in the special expressiveness of exactly found intonations, image-bearing details of the piano part, the variety of the author's instructions about the way how to perform, including the subtle dynamic nuances. Banevich knows well specific features of children's perception and performance opportunities, and therefore he creates charming miniatures with the simple and easy to remember, but always individualized melody and the role of the piano part, significant by its expressiveness. The collection of piano pieces and ensembles "The Little Mermaid" is also very popular. Their plots are based on the famous fairy tale by H.Ch. Andersen. First Sergey Banevich wrote opera- ballet for children "The Little Mermaid" based on the fairy tale, and then created the album consisting of 14 piano pieces. Piano Suite "Pushkin's Fairy Tales" by Sergei Banevich also ranks among the repertoire of works for children's music schools. The composer chose Alexander Pushkin's fairy tales not by chance. In Russia more than one generation of children grew with Pushkin's fairy tales. The plots of instructive fairy tales by Pushkin, told in the musical language by Sergey Banevich, contribute to developing the child's sensitivity to art and creative imagination. A true musical gift for children from Sergei Banevich is the album of piano pieces "Petersburg Pages", created in the honour of St. Petersburg's tercentenary and addressed to children. Piano miniatures in this collection have names associated with the composer's memories about his childhood, St. Petersburg's history and life: *"The White Nights", "The Bronze Horseman", "Snowflakes over the Lion Bridge", "The Courtyards", "The Jukebox", "Memories of the Siege", "The Puppet Museum on Vasilyevsky Island", "The Summer Garden", "The Flood", "The Petersburg Elegy"*. All the pieces are riddled with the nostalgic and gentle tone, which Banevich feels with his love for this city. He tries, as an adult, to attract the attention of the children's audience through St. Petersburg's pictures and the simple musical language, and to ask them to think about the meaning of life and the history of Russia. Sergei Banevich's piano music is a whole world, embodied in sounds. His images come alive in the sounds of the piano. They can be typical characters, the human voice, and the instruments of the orchestra, the sounds of Nature and the richness of the prosodic content. The rich palette of St. Petersburg composers' creativity in the genre of the piano ensemble addressed to children, helps to develop the children's creative potential and attaches to understanding the higher spiritual values in the world of the musical culture.

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