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About the Peculiarities of Form Generation in the Adyghe Epic Genre

This article presents the study of the oldest genre of Adyghe folk music pertaining to the 2nd millennium BC. The structures of the peculiarities of form generation in the procedural aspect of their structure are examined on the basis of the unique song specimens preserved to our day in which the faraway world of the protagonists of the heroic epos “The Narts.” For the first time the attempt is made to attribute the characteristic form-structures in Nart songs, demonstrations of the typified model of interaction between music and the verbal text, and establishment of the correspondence of the songs spatial-temporal parameters with their stadial factor of real existence.

Keywords: Adyghe folk music, epos “The Narts,” pshinatli, procedural side of form, typical model of the genre of folk music, antiphonal, bourdon and stretto forms of cohesion, solo and group singing.

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Об особенностях формообразования в адыгском эпическом жанре

В данной статье представлены результаты изучения древнейшего фольклорного жанра проживающих на территории России адыгов, относящегося ко II тыс. до н. э. На основе сохранившихся до наших дней уникальных песенных образцов, в которых отражается далёкий мир героического эпоса «Нарты», рассматриваются структурные особенности формообразования в процессуальном аспекте их строения. Впервые предпринимается попытка атрибутировать характерные формы-структуры в нартских песнях, выявить типовую модель взаимодействия музыки и вербального текста, установить соответствие пространственно-временных параметров песен с их стадийным фактором реального бытования.



Ключевые слова: фольклор адыгов, эпос «Нарты», пшинатли, музыкальная форма, типовая модель фольклорного жанра, антифонная, бурдонная и стреттная формы, сольно-групповые песнопения.

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During the Soviet period of our history up to the 1960s in the dichotomy of “*form vs. content*” our musicology did not give sufficient attention to the semantic significance of the first category. One of the reasons for such an unjustified state of affairs could be explained by the well-known harsh pressure of the politically motivated concept of “formalism” of that historical period which promoted the mandatory rendition of two prevailing terms of scholarly discourse – “culture (to an equal degree as art) is national in its form and socialist in its content.” In our times such a definition is perceived to be paradoxical, since all of this occurred at the time when Boris Asafiev had already published his outstanding research work “*Muzykal'naya forma kak protses*” [“Musical Form as a Process”] (1930), which presented the organic unity of the architectonics of music and the semantics of its content, the conception of which remains on demand up to the present day [1].

It must be presumed that many representatives of culture and art (composers, practicing musicologists, folklorists and scholars), including those of us who have studied in various conservatories in the 1970s, frequently repeated the “customary” formulation, while clearly comprehending the given ideological conditions and by tacit agreement following the conventional “rules of the game” imposed from above. Nonetheless, composers in their musical works had resorted to various techniques

of development which vividly revealed the procedural side of music which at times it was very difficult to define as national. In their turn, the musicologists, without fixating on the context of research expected by the “social censors” tried to disclose in exceedingly cautious ways and in a veiled form the particularities of form-generation of specific musical compositions which could be discovered in the hidden implication of their works¹.

Just prior to the 1970s the problematics of the procedural side of form once again finds itself within the sphere of attention of music scholarship; in particular, Yuri Kholopov, while examining the significance of musical structure, concentrates his perspective of the present issue in his book “*Vvedenie v muzykal'nuyu formu*” [“Introduction to Musical Form”]. As Tatiana Kyuregyan and Valeria Tsenova note, in this work the music theorist defines “musical form as an ontological, theoretical and historical unity which gradually unfolds in time – from the ancient eras up to ‘the present day,’ from monody and polyphony to sonoristics... the beginning of music in general and of musical form in particular” [12, p. 4]. Kholopov’s research was preceded by the well-known works of Igor Sposobin, Victor Tsukerman, Leo Mazel and others. A qualitative stage of comprehension of music in the context of new angles of the study of its content-based aspects (*emotions, figurativeness and symbolism*) has been demonstrated by the research works of Valentina Kholopova

[11], Liudmila Kazantseva [6], and Liudmila Shaymukhametova [16], who have laid the foundations in contemporary Russian musicology of a new analytical direction – the theory of musical content. This short excursus into the interpretation of one of the most important musical terms which interests us – *form*, – shall be concluded by us with the words of Doctor of Arts, Professor Marina Chyornaya: “Musical form is not a means of conveying the conception, but a means of existence” [13, p. 10].

In Russian folk music studies the problem range of the structural element of music of oral traditions has been examined chiefly in the context of syncretic interaction between the folk melody and the text in connection with the demonstration of the genre definition. Special terminological definitions disclosing the structural units of folk song melodicism have been specified: “the intonational complex” (Zinnaida Evald), “the song relationship” (Filaret Kolessa), “polystructurality” (Kliment Kvitka), “syllabo-note” and “strophe-measure” (Anna Rudneva), “folk song stanza form” and “rhythmic periodization of melody” (Evgeny Gippius), etc.

The issues of emergence of form in folk music melodicism are dwelt upon in the works of Rudneva, who for the first time makes the attempt of systematizing the structures of Russian folk song, taking as a basis the architectonics of the melodic stanza, which discloses itself in multiple ways in various genre formations (“O vzaimozvyazi stiha i napeva v russkoy narodnoy pesne” [“About the Interconnection of the Verse and the Tune in Russian Folksongs”]). The logic of the forms of structural divisions of the rhythmic-intonational line of the folksong melodies offered by the researcher is demonstrated in each concrete case with the backing of the types of versification (tonic, syllabic or accentual-syllabic) and

with the consideration of genre functioning. Thereby, Rudneva differentiates form-generation in the Russian folksong culture into *non-strophic* (single-verse) and *strophic structures*. The article “O rasstanovke taktovyh chert v russkih narodnyh pesnyah” [“About the Arrangements of Barlines in Russian Folksongs”] bears a direct relationship to its conception of structural classification which presents practical material disclosing the recurring forms of endowing melodic stanzas with pauses and emergences of typified melodic formulas [8, pp. 11–69, 70–138].

Each of the aforementioned folklorists-researchers within the problem range of form-generation was interested most of all in the question of the song’s outer structure and, at the same time, chose, as a rule, one angle of consideration. The latter may have been either the musical side of the song, its poetical side, or its rhythmic aspect. In our opinion, a significant page of the penetration into the inner process of form-generation in the music of the oral tradition is opened by Izaliy Zemtsovsky in his monograph “Russkaya protyazhnaya pesnya” [“Russian Plangent Song”] [5]. On the basis of his examination of lyrical plangent songs, the music theorist demonstrates the distinct character of the melodic stanza in them, which in many ways does not coincide with the stereotypical strophic structure intrinsic to the songs. The procedural character of the melodic self-motion in the present genre is disclosed with a reliance on the songs’ monophonic intonation, which presents its peculiar thematic core, from whence occurs the “variant outgrowth” (according to Vladimir Protopopov) of melodic phrases of an intonational character with significant rhythmic-intonational, modal and textural changes. The structural particularity of the examined form-structure reflects the principle of through developed which is

characterized by an “arch” conclusion of the melody, or through form, when the final stage of the melody’s development presents the summarized meaning. As Nina Savelyeva writes, Andrei Kabanov conducted the first research of the structural particularities in the Don Region plangent songs of the Cossack tradition, in which it “determines the function of each vocal part in the ensemble and its role in the formation of the structure,” especially highlighting the characteristic “length of unfolding of the musical-poetical structure” [9, pp. 11–12].

A colossal research work on form-generation of the music of the oral tradition was carried out in 2011 by Savelieva. In her generation “Problema formy v russkoy narodnoy pesne” [“The Issue of Form in Russian Folksongs”] the author, basing herself on Asafiev’s intonational theory, systematizes the principle of form-generation in folk song genres. This work is the first to present an integrated view of the genesis of the Russian folk song in the aspect of its regularities, “bringing forward new principles of classification and systematization of structures.” In this context Savelieva, continuing the search of her predecessors, chooses a new approach towards the examined problem range “based not on quantitative, but on qualitative criteria,” which, according to Asafiev, makes it possible to classify forms “not according to the resulting constructions, but according to the principles of development” [10, p. 4]. Thereby, the researcher discloses new possibilities of a more profound penetration into the texture of the folk song with the aim of comprehending the procedural motions within it.²

The questions of form-generation in traditional Adyghe songs were examined by us numerous times [2]. Thus, the stratification of typified form-structures, which have been widely disseminated in

folk musical compositions from the form of single-stanza melodies to composite song stanzas. For the first time we have demonstrated the special structure of the melodies which reflects concrete historical events and the valorous actions of heroes. In the latter the form-generation in many ways does not coincide with the conventional norms of the structural organizations of folksong genres, which more often than not embrace a through development of the melodic stanzas.

In the present work we have made the attempt for the first time to attribute the characteristic form-structures in the Nart songs (the pshinatli)³ of the Adyghe, reveal the peculiarities of the interaction between the music and the verbal texts, and establish correspondences between the spatial-temporal parameters with their stadia factor of real existence.

It is well known that music exists in reality only during the time of its sounding, and such regular occurrence presents us with the possibility of discerning objective structural particularities dependent on the functional accessory of each musical work. For this reason, when traditional culture is constantly being deprived of its initial conditions for existence, we perceive as being most important the reconstruction of the primary situational possibilities of its being with the observation of several marked differences, following the characteristic algorithmics of each performance, including the performing manner stylistically appropriate for it. When defining the architectonics of a folk song, it is important to consider the crystalline units of music examined by Chyornaya as “measured fragments” the inner interaction of which arrays the content-based outline of the melodic stanza [13].

Upon first encounter, the separate pitches of the song’s melody, their rhythmically intonated correlations, the modal structure

and the textural peculiarities may be perceived as abstract units. However, it is known that back in 1934 Evald brought into Russian folk music studies the new term “intonational complex,” which “in a definite way is cognized by a concrete social milieu” [14]. It must be noted that its semantic meaning turned out to be a rather revolutionary idea for that time. At the dawn of active development of ethnomusicological research activities, Evald’s term already indicated at the significance of aggregative musical-poetic expressive means and their semantic fill-up, thereby slightly opening the curtain of the content-richness of the song’s melodic stanza.

While demonstrating the capabilities of form-construction in folk songs, we must assert that the verbal text exists in a song on an equal footage with the music as an indispensable form-generating structural constant. By its semantic signification, character of articulatory utterance and, being present within definite frameworks of the size of the verse, in many ways determines the forms of the correlations of the compositional units within the song’s melodic stanza and measurably establishes the algorithmics of the spatial-temporal existence in living folk music practice.

By applying the given axiom in our research, we have established the recurring law that the typology of architectonics of the Adyghe epic songs generally takes shape to a great degree under the impact of a meaning-bearing text the origin of which in its initial form is perceived by the majority of folklorist philologists as a narrative which has appeared in verse form.

This argument is of crucial significance for the definition of the structural differences of the folklore genre of a remote historical time from the successive song genres. The socially ritualized ceremonial actions in Nart society, where the communicative

processes were permeated by a special syncretism of a “poetic-musical-theatrical-dance action” (according to Angelina Alpatova), created the corresponding impact on the participants’ psycho-motoric and emotional behavior. For this reason, as we presume, an important role in the Narts’ daily communication may have been played by the melodramatic recitation form of self-expression directly reflected in the epic songs preserved to our days.

In the present article we set the goal of identifying the Adyghe’s archaic pshinatli in the context of disclosing the architectonic particularities, unearthing compositional models appropriate for them in the relict song melodies which would have corresponded to that distant epoch. One of the stimuli for a successful fulfillment of the goal set before is that circumstance that in the Adyghe epic songs the form-structure has an essential distinction from the other subsequent folk music strata. First of all, the external stylistic indication of the verbal element is the predominantly expatiating means of its exposition and the brevity of the syllable-measuring structure of the verse (the prevalence of six to eight-syllable lines), which exerted a noticeable impact on the temporal features of transmission of folkloristic information. Second, the mobility of the isochronally pulsating melodramatic recitation in the pshinatli based on the correlation of the pitches with the active energy of sound (due to the tradition of solely male singing) with the predominance of intervallic intonations of major seconds and perfect fourths with their concise rhythmic was in many ways determined by the natural-acoustic characterization of their habitat. As a rule, this took place in open space: during the course of public merrymaking, ritual actions, in front of the Khasé (Council of Elders), during festivities, etc.



We are inclined to think that such a milieu for communication was beneficial towards the actualization of the extroverted directedness of the impulsive behavior on the parts of the performers of folklore information who pursued its broad spatial dissemination. In this process of inter-generation transmission an important aim was pursued – of exerting an active impulse on the consciousness and thought of the people who perceived this information in society. If the Nart song is considered, for instance, as one of the means of communication as an “informational centerpiece” (a melodic stanza), it acquired a special kind of periodicity of localization in space, a relative type of visualization of the “three-dimensional” sound which further enhanced its sonorous-phonetic qualities. Even in our time, when the epic song has long lost its genre productivity, its contemporary perception is accepted by us from the position of a solely aesthetic function, all of the enumerated initial main traits of the pshinatli remain recognizable. The main reason for such a phenomenon, in our opinion, is in the fact that the Adyghe Nart song was able to preserve the important a priori genre-determining features.

First of all, let us name the traditional form of performance – the male solo-and-group singing, in which the dialogic interaction between the soloist and the male chorus is in parity relations, so in various different versions of their coexistence we can always observe a state of equilibrium and spatial-temporal symmetry. The texture of the song may be extensionally broadened by means of additional accompaniment to the melody of instrumental lines.⁴ Nonetheless, they do not exert any substantial influence on the song’s form-generation, but merely carry the additional function of enriching the modal-intonational and the timbral-registral spheres.

The second genre-related specificity of the pshinatli consists in the strict correspondence of the syntactic units of the text and the melody in the vertical and horizontal dimensions (a syllable equals to a note, while a stanza is equal to a motive or phrase). Such a principle of their correlation according to the principle of “punctus contra punctum” forms an exclusive usage of the syllabic type of melodic construction. The further disclosure of a minimal degree of inner-syllable monody within the framework of two pitches takes place, as a rule, at the end of the melody as a result of the descent in the performer’s intonation. The additional assonant word formations, so typical not only for Adyghe folklore, but for many other ethnic cultures of the Caucasus, end up being not as relevant in the epic genre in their influence on the inner structure of the song’s melody.

Betal Kuashev notes that in the texts of the pshinatli “the syllable corresponds to smallest unit of the rhythm of the poetic line (the measure), so in these poems there are as many rhythmic units as there are syllables” up to a “a coincidence of syllable and seme, syllable and phoneme.” Regarding vocalizations, he also observed that they are not subject to broad expansion: “If the final consonants (in the line) are spirants «ш» (“sh”), «ж» (“zh”), «гъ» (“gh”), i.e., if they terminate the final syllable, no vocalization occurs, since a vocalization involving these particular letters may invoke a change in the meaning of a particular word” [7, p. 179–180]. The particular features of versification in the Adyghe epic poems insightfully observed by the scholar back in 1966 turned out to be very topical in the disclosure of the pshinatli’s musical structure in our days.

Nevertheless, the verbal insertions of an interjectional character (amplifications) still optionally exist in the pshinatli, while not disrupting the temporal parameters of the

musical architectonics and preserving the song's pitch line. On rare occasions there may be an additional word formation of a solemn, invocatory character in front of the main meaning-bearing line or at the end of the melody. On their basis the emerging melodic turns acquire more often the meaning of a peculiar intonation, or carry out the function of a song's cadential conclusion, and we classify them as auxiliary elements which are frequently situated beyond the frameworks of the song's main melody.

An important indicator of the marked quality of the Adyghe epic songs must also be sought for in the particularities of the inner structural organization the first plan of which does not surpass the form of a single-line (single-phrase, according to Feodosiy Rubtsov) or two-line song stanza. Nonetheless, when tracing the interaction of the main performers (the soloist and the male chorus), which are in an active dialogic connection with each other, we frequently discover inner procedural "deviations from the norm" inherent only to the pshinatli, which complexify the compositional structure of the early folk music genre.

In all the cases of variability of structuring of the melodic stanza the inner procedural incongruities assert the composition's individual schemes, but, nonetheless, they are unified by the constant duple-meter basis of a mono-metric pulsation, which is a time-measuring denominator of the highest order (*chronos protos*) in the examined genre of folk music.

It must also be noted that the "musical-poetical measure" of the melody (according to Savelieva), as a rule, is stable during the course of the pshinatli's entire macro-form. A violation of such a principle may occur in such instances when the tirade principle of exposition of the text in the melodic stanza frequently changes the number of repetitions of the variated melodic verse.

The additional expansion of the macroform in many compositions occurs by means of the introduction in the very beginning of the performance, which features the statement either of the part of the chorus, or together with the instrumental accompaniment, if the particular ensemble includes performers on string and percussion instruments. Among the exceptional qualities of form-generation in the Adyghe epic songs we can count the spatial-temporal capacity of a separately taken song in which the single-line melody or the two-line melodic stanza is repeated from 6 to 196 times, varying itself chiefly in its rhythmic intonational manner.

Thus, the Adyghe epic melodies which have preserved the tradition of solo-and-group singing demonstrate a typified form-generating model which is presented in the structures of the single-line melody and the double-line song stanza. They are conditioned by an archaic syncretism of text and music with the functional particularities of the genre in the society of the Narts, who have been determined to be the remote ancestors of the Adyghees. The various forms of interaction between the soloist and the accompaniment of the male vocal ensemble (antiphonal, bourdon or stretto), the parity change of the songs' textures create variability of the initial two basic form-structures defined by us as the intermediate form. Starting from the solo melodic line, the tune acquires a multiline song stanza depending on the amount of tirade lines sung through by the soloist, acquiring a mixed character of architectonics of the songs' melody. In other instances, in the case of a stretto form of interaction between the soloist and the male chorus, the lower stratum is frequently expanded intonationally, acquiring the function of a relatively independent unit of the form which at the same time creates the precedent of bringing in polyphonic features



into the overall texture of the song. The combination of the two-line melody with the one-line feature of the melody may also be observed in the vertical cohesion of the lines of the first singer and the male chorus. Their simultaneous sound creates a vivid impression of unity of the mixed structures and its special compositional directedness.

NOTES

¹ Here it is necessary also to recall the times of the Iron Curtain, which served as a sturdy obstacle for socialist culture for applying new compositional methods of manifestation of musical ideas, such as, for instance, the dodecaphonic technique. However, here too the authors contrived to “conceal” the newest forms of compositional techniques of musical expressionism in the overall textures of their works.

² Such a specific form-generation for Russian traditional folk music in which the structural content-based side adequately reflects the musical-poetic context of the songs turned out to be relevant in the monadic “extended” songs of Tatars, Bashkirs and Kalmyks, as well as the polyphonic solo-and-group historical-heroic songs of the Adyghe. Particularly in the latter songs we have observed a total correspondence between the logic of unfolding of the rhythmic-intonational contentment of the melodic stanza with Asafiev’s imt triad.

³ The pshinatl is a personified expression from the Adyghe folk terminology, signifying the earliest song genre pertaining to the period of formation of the heroic epos “The Narts.” Its translation from the Adyghe language in the spatial-sacred meaning indicates at a repository (abundance) associated with the capaciousness of the emotional, visual-sensual perception of music. the term is used solely for defining Nart songs and instrumental tunes. The individualization of the present expression is perceived to be natural, if one is to make a translation of the semantic content and specify its semantic meaning in the people’s subconscious.

⁴ Most frequently, the bowed string shikapshina, reckoned by ethnographers among the Adyghe aristocratic musical instruments, was used as the instrumental accompaniment. The plucked string instrument, the *apapshina*, could be used extremely rarely. Among the percussion instruments, priority was given to the *pkhatsichu* (a type of hand-rattle). Not infrequently hand claps were incorporated in performances.

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